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SANTA CLARA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Annual Report

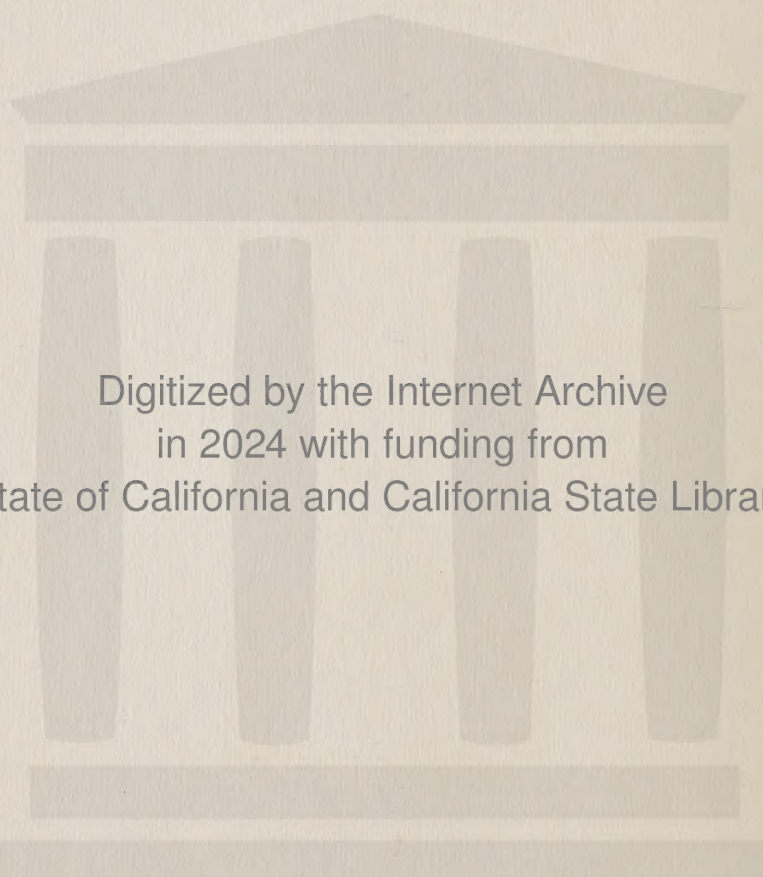


PLANNING

SANTA CLARA
COUNTY'S FUTURE



1939



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TEN YEARS OF PLANNING AND A PLANNING FORECAST



Annual Report

1938 - 1939



SANTA CLARA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

1939

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

PLANNING COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS

O. F. CAMPBELL	E. O. WOOL
W. W. CURTNER	Board of Supervisors
CHARLES KUHN	J. P. FITZGERALD
GEORGE WENTZ	District Attorney
W. B. WESTON	R. B. CHANDLER
DR. R. A. WHIFFEN	County Surveyor

RONALD CAMPBELL	JAMES CAMPBELL
Planning Advisor	Engineer-Secretary

COURT HOUSE
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

July 1, 1939

To the Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Clara
California.

Gentlemen:

We herewith present a report of the activities and accomplishments of the County Planning Commission for the fiscal year 1938-1939.

The present year is the tenth since the Commission was organized and we believe it is time to present a rather complete account of our work, together with examples of the value of the general planning program. We have, therefore, combined with our annual report a resume of our most important undertakings to date and a forecast of the activities planned for the future.

The Commission was first appointed by your Board on December 2, 1929, and held its organization meeting on February 26, 1930. Shortly thereafter the Commission employed Hugh R. Pomeroy to outline the Commission's work program and to act as technical advisor. He held this office with the Commission until the middle of 1938, when he resigned to devote his entire time to the position of field secretary for the American Society of Planning Officials.

The Commission appointed Ronald Campbell, formerly associated with Mr. Pomeroy, to the position of Planning Advisor to carry on the work so ably started by him.

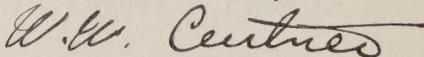
The present Commission, recognizing the importance of the service rendered the County by former members, here takes the opportunity to mention them as having contributed to our planning progress.

Two charter members, V. T. McCurdy and Warren H. Pomeroy who were active in organizing the commission, resigned in 1931.

Harry T. Reynolds and Fred L. Thomas were also charter members. Mr. Thomas, having been District Attorney, gave the commission much valuable advice during its formative period, and Mr. Reynolds was able to offer the benefit of a mature judgement gained in his many years of business experience. These two members died in 1938 as did John T. Irwin who had been appointed to succeed Warren Pomeroy.

We wish to thank your Board for the support that has made our work program possible and we trust that the following report will indicate the value to our County of the services being performed by this department of your government.

Respectfully submitted,



W. W. Curtner, Chairman

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of San Jose

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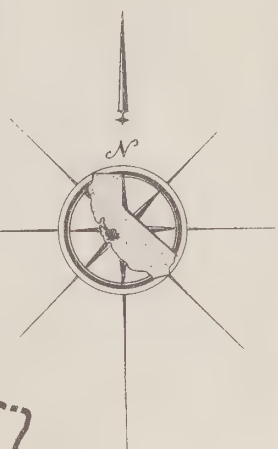
RONALD CAMPBELL
Planning Advisor

JAMES CAMPBELL
Engineer-Secretary

PROGRESS REPORT
OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION

SANTA CLARA COUNTY
CALIFORNIA

1929-1939



FORWARD

Planning in Santa Clara County has as its major objectives: first, the preparation of a comprehensive master plan that will serve as a guide for the orderly development in a sound and economical manner, of our future growth, and will protect the character and the social and economic stability of the various areas now developed; and second, the effectuation of this plan.

In December, 1929, the County Board of Supervisors realized the necessity of starting work on a County Plan and appointed a Planning Commission. The first few years of the Commission's time were spent in gathering existing information and in fact finding. The program went ahead slowly due to the lack of a staff, all the work being done by the Commission members and the technical advisor.

The second step in the Commission's work program was the analyzing of the information collected, the defining of planning objectives, and the preparation of plans and ordinances to carry them out. These plans and ordinances become part of the master plan. This master plan must be flexible and is the beginning of an evolving program which attempts to keep the county's objectives well ahead of actual development.

The third stage in the County Planning program, the carrying out of the plans, is just being reached by the Commission. Many important phases of planning work have not been studied. The urgency of certain problems has required giving priority to their study and solution, but as we dispose of these various subjects we will have an opportunity to complete the other parts of the master plan.

On the following pages we briefly report on the sections of the master plan upon which work is under way. We trust that it will properly indicate the general scope of the Commission's work and the service that we are trying to perform.



HISTORICAL

Two early explorers, Sir Francis Drake and Cabrillo, viewed the Santa Clara Valley, but not until 1769 did the Spanish government endeavor to colonize the region, and eight years later the Pueblo de San Jose de Guadalupe was established and laid out according to a plan sent from Spain by way of Mexico City. Earlier that same year the Padres founded historic Santa Clara Mission.

The pioneers wrested this land from Mexican rule in 1846 and three years thereafter San Jose, the first incorporated town in California, was made the State Capitol by the provisional government.

Today Santa Clara County, with a population of approximately 180,000 persons, is the site of San Jose State College, the University of Santa Clara, Stanford University, Lick Observatory and numerous other educational institutions.

The county is largely agricultural in character and is the center of the world's canning and dried fruit industry.



PLATE I.

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS

Located at the southern end of San Francisco Bay and bounded on the east and west by high mountain ranges, Santa Clara County provides the natural site for a section of one of the two main north-and-south state highways, U. S. 101. This highway bisects the county from the southerly boundary to San Jose, where it divides into three major arteries, El Camino Real and Bayshore Highway leading to San Francisco and the Golden Gate bridge, and the Oakland road (California routes) leading to Oakland and East Bay areas.

These highways carry not only a large portion of California's through north and south traffic but also a great volume of traffic originating in the rich agricultural districts along the coastal plain, and the recreation traffic whose destination lies in the areas in and west of Santa Clara County.

One of the major accomplishments of the Planning Commission has been the establishment of setback lines 30 feet on each side of U. S. 101 By-Pass (Bayshore Highway) to provide for future widening of the main trunk highway to an ultimate width of 185 feet. This cross section will consist of a divided through traffic highway with a local service roadway on each side separated from the through traffic roads by park strips.

In addition to the protection of the future rights of way, the commission has zoned the margins of this trunk highway to preserve its scenic character (Plate I) by providing for advisory architectural control for the buildings constructed along it.

Plate II shows a section of the Bayshore Highway (U. S. 101 By-Pass) about 40 miles south of San Francisco, where it runs through agricultural lands.

The through traffic carrying ability of the Bayshore Highway is protected by setting roadside businesses well back from the margin of the right of way (30 feet). This setback provides ample parking space in front of the business and allows for turning without getting out in the traffic lanes. Contrast this desirable condition with the situation shown in Plate IV. This picture taken along the

Continued on page 12





PLATE II. View of Bayshore Highway, Scenic Character protected by adoption of Zoning Ordinance establishing 30' setback, prohibiting billboards.

ROADS AND HIGHWAYS *Continued from page 10*

Monterey Road (U. S. 101) south of San Jose, shows a business establishment built on the property line many years ago before this road carried its present large volume of traffic. Here the cars are parked on the shoulder of the highway next to the high speed traffic lane.

One of the most important early undertakings of the Commission was the undertaking of extensive studies for the extension of Bayshore Highway (U. S. 101 By-Pass) southerly through the county to San Jose, and the routing of the highway within the city. A major consideration in the preparation of this report was provision for a means of moving large volumes of traffic rapidly by the city without mixing through traffic with local business traffic.

Inasmuch as the framework or skeleton of an area is formed by its streets and highway pattern, the commission has given a great deal of time and effort to the preparation of a tentative Streets and Highways Plan. By means of this plan, adopted in January, 1938, we expect to avoid the costly street openings and widenings that usually result from the lack of an adequate highway plan.

All new subdivisions are fitted into this highway plan and where main roads adjoin or run through these new subdivisions the commission has secured present or future dedications to provide for future road widening in conformance with the plan. The commission has secured the dedication of additional rights of way along the margins of existing narrow roads to provide for many miles of widening with no expenditure of public funds for right of way acquisition.

The acquisition of such rights of way will save the taxpayers of the county and state hundreds of thousands of dollars when it is necessary to widen the existing narrow pavements on these roadways. It also protects the property owners from the inconvenience and depreciation of land value which results when widening is provided by taking a part or all of the front yard area, leaving residences right against the sidewalk line.



TOP—Business on Bayshore Highway (U. S. 101 Alt.) set well back to provide ample off-highway parking and turning space. PLATE III.

BOTTOM — Monterey Road south of San Jose. Business establishment on highway line. Shoulder used for parking, inadequate parking space.



PLATE IV.



PLATE V.

ABOVE—Well designed gas station, cor. El Camino Real and University Avenue, Palo Alto.

BELOW — Attractive, inexpensively constructed restaurant, El Camino Real at Embarcadero Road, Palo Alto.

PLATE VI.





ARCHITECTURAL CONTROL

PLATE VII.

One of the sections of the County Zoning Ordinance adopted in August, 1937, provides for advisory architectural supervision of the buildings constructed along the State highways and main County roads. The objectives of this action by the Commission are illustrated by Plates V and VI. These pictures are of two buildings within the Palo Alto city limits, the first an admirably designed gasoline station that would be a credit to any commercial district, the second a very inexpensively constructed building that has a great deal of charm, indicating one way in which good design can contribute to the success of a business and the improvement of the appearance of our roadsides.

Plate VIII pictures a roadside establishment built without benefit of architect or architectural control.

ZONING

Zoning should be one of the last units of the master plan to be undertaken. However, in Santa Clara County, the rapid development of roadsides and the spreading out of incorporated communities with the establishment of undesirable commercial enterprises in the "no man's land" just beyond city limits lines created a demand for county zoning to protect the periphery of the zoned cities.

In response to this demand the commission prepared a comprehensive zoning ordinance which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on August 25, 1937. It is the intention of the commission to extend the provisions of this ordinance to various communities by the adoption of zoning maps.



PLATE VIII.

ABOVE—Example of need for zoning protection.

BELOW—Residence unprotected by zoning ordinance.

PLATE IX.





PLATE X.

TOP — "Four Corner" business establishment set back on residential front yard line as provided by zoning ordinance. Preserves view and sun and air.



PLATE XI.

RIGHT — Residential streets in East San Jose. This desirable home neighborhood protected by zoning ordinance from development of commercial or multiple family uses.



PLATE XII.

ZONING

Continued from page 15

The first area protected by this ordinance was the East San Jose district, an area of about ten square miles lying to the east of San Jose. The zoning ordinance provides for the establishment of districts restricted solely to residential development and allows necessary business, agricultural and industrial undertakings in locations where they will not be detrimental to the residential areas. It also establishes minimum yard widths, building height limits and minimum lot widths and areas.

Plates XI and XII show residences protected from the intrusion of undesirable apartment house developments and commercial establishments. The property owners of this district are protected from the location of business uses such as those shown in Plates VIII and IX.

A section of the zoning ordinance provides that commercial structures built in local shopping centers must hold the same set-back lines as the residences adjacent to the shopping area. This is illustrated in Plate X; the commercial building is set well back to provide for light and air and to maintain the uniform building line.

The success of this first zoning plan is attested by the fact that eight other communities have petitioned for protective zoning. The commission, pending completion of the necessary land use studies, has prepared interim ordinances which were adopted by the Board of Supervisors for the immediate protection of these areas.

The ordinance provides for the issuance of building permits in the zoned areas by the Planning Commission (there being no county building code), and since the adoption of the zoning plan in 1937, the commission has granted approximately two hundred such permits for structures having an aggregate value of \$4,350,000.00

SUBDIVISION CONTROL

Legend tells us that the streets of Boston were laid out along the meandering paths made by the early settlers' homcoming cows, with the obvious result of today's appallingly inadequate street system. The unregulated subdivision of land by individuals having neither regard for nor knowledge of their neighbors' plans, results in an even worse situation.

Face to face with this problem the Planning Commission took as its first job following its appointment and organization in 1939, the preparation of a Subdivision Ordinance to serve as a guide for orderly land subdivision. This ordinance was completed and adopted in October, 1930, and has resulted in a marked improvement in subsequent subdivision standards.

The ordinance, among other things, provides for minimum lot sizes, adequate through and local streets, and proper subdivision design and improvements.

Provision of streets of adequate width and on proper alignment for future traffic requirements is of tremendous importance to the county from an economic standpoint. We hope to obviate the necessity for some of the expenditures of public funds for future street opening and widening, and also to protect land owners from the unpleasant condition resulting from taking front yards to widen streets.



PLATE XIII.

ABOVE—Part of a recorded subdivision. Note poor means of access, double frontage lots, odd shapes and sizes of lots and wasteful multiple easements.

BELOW—Same land area as it might have been developed by proper subdivision practice now required by county subdivision ordinance.

PLATE XIV.



FUTURE PROGRAM

The commission's program for the immediate future consists mainly of completing work now under way on major units of the master plan, as follows:

1. Completion of base maps. When the commission was organized there were no base maps of the county available. The commission has now completed maps of the entire county on scales of one inch equals one mile, one inch equals two thousand feet and one inch equals one thousand feet. Several sections of a set of maps on a scale of one inch equals three hundred feet have been completed, and additional sections are being prepared.
2. Completion of land use surveys and extension of zoning protection to numerous areas of the county.
3. Official adoption of Streets and Highways Plan by the Board of Supervisors, and preparation and adoption by the commission of additional precise lines to establish and protect future widths for main state and county highways not yet so protected.
4. Completion of highway traffic check and preparation of traffic and transit report.

In addition to the above work, the commission will commence field work and studies for the preparation of a natural resources and conservation plan, and for a master park, parkway and recreation plan.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Annual Report

1938 - 1939

The past year has been a particularly active one for the Santa Clara County Planning Commission. The marked increase in work has been due to the fact that it is being called upon by the Board of Supervisors to undertake studies and make recommendations on many county problems, and because the public is now aware of the service that the Commission can render, and is calling for more and more help from the Commission.

As the work of the Planning Commission becomes better known, many small unincorporated communities in the county are asking for zoning protection and as the zoning plan is extended to these areas the administration of the zoning ordinance becomes more time consuming.

In order that the Commission may have a sound background for the development of a master plan, we have continued our base map work and this past

year have completed a major highway traffic flow map and a population density map. An increasingly larger percent of the Commission's time is being taken up by the consideration of subdivision maps. The ultimate success of the highway pattern is dependent upon adequate control of the street layout of these subdivisions, and with the adoption of the tentative street and highway plan we have a framework into which these new subdivisions are being fitted.

Following is a summary of the Commission's activities for the past fiscal year:

A. STATISTICAL DATA:

1. Meetings:

- 12 Regular Commission Meetings.
- 6 Special Commission Meetings.
- 3 Informal Community Zoning Hearings.
- 2 Commission Field Trips.

2. Administrative Activities:

- 53 Subdivision Maps considered.
- 51 Subdivision Maps approved.
- 2 Subdivision Maps disapproved.
- 1 Zoning Adjustment considered.
- 1 Zoning Adjustment approved.
- 16 Zoning Use Permits considered.
- 12 Zoning Use Permits approved.
- 75 Building Permits issued—having a value of \$4,135,000.00.
- 1 Re-Zoning Application considered.
- 1 Re-Zoning Application denied.
- 3 Zoning Ordinance changes considered.
- 3 Zoning Ordinance changes approved.

3. Legislation:

- 6 Interim Zoning Ordinances prepared.
- 1 Building Line Ordinance prepared.
- 1 Future Width Line Ordinance prepared (Amending Zoning Ordinance).
- 1 Official Plan Line Ordinance prepared (Amending Highway Plan).
- 1 Revised Subdivision Ordinance prepared.
- 1 Ordinance to control Auto Trailer Camps prepared.
- 1 Amendment to Zoning Ordinance to control Auto Camps prepared.

B. PROGRESS ON MASTER PLAN:

1. Traffic flow diagrams and population density maps completed; will serve as guides for preparation of revised Streets and Highways Plan and a Park and Recreation Plan.
2. Base map and statistical material completed for Conservation Plan.
3. Preliminary plans completed for first section of Community Design Plan.

C. PROGRESS ON OFFICIAL PLANS:

1. Master Plan of Streets and Highways has been extended to include one additional section of the State Highway system in the county.
2. Interim Ordinance adopted to protect margins of other State Highways until Official Plan Lines can be adopted.
3. Zoning Ordinance has been amended as follows:
 - a. Include new section of the county adjacent to Palo Alto.
 - b. Application for amendment to increase McKee Road business district denied.
 - c. Amendment to Ordinance to provide control over transient camps approved.
4. Land Subdivision Ordinance:

The County Subdivision Control Ordinance was revised to conform with the changes made in the State Map Filing Act and the Ordinance together with standard forms for map title sheets, printed in a booklet for distribution to subdividers.

D. REPORTS ISSUED:

1. Early in the year, following the adoption of the East San Jose Section of the Zoning Ordinance, the Commission prepared and published a booklet, containing an outline description of the Ordinance, which was distributed in the district.
2. The Commission revised the Land Subdivision Ordinance and published this Ordinance together with approved title sheet forms, in a booklet for distribution to subdividers.
3. The Commission has just completed ten years of work which is summarized in the booklet of which this report is a part.

E. OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

1. Official Plan Lines for Streets and Highways:

The Planning Commission has cooperated with the District Engineer's Office of the State Highway Commission by establishing official plan lines for 10 miles of State highways. These lines provide for the future widening of these roads, and by keeping buildings back will save the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars which would otherwise be required to move back or rebuild these buildings.

2. Adequate Street and Highway Dedications:

By fitting new subdivision plans into the framework of the Master Streets and Highways plan, and by securing the dedication by the subdivider of extra land to provide for the future widening of 60-foot county and state highways to ultimate widths, in accordance with the highway plan, of 86 feet and 110 feet, the Commission is securing at no cost to the county, properties which if acquired by purchase when the roads are widened, would require the expenditure of tremendous sums of money. During the past year the Commission has secured the outright dedication of extra widths to widen 40 foot roads to 60 feet for 17,670 linear feet, to widen 5,770 linear feet of roads to 86 feet and to widen 4,705 linear feet of roads to 110 feet or more.

3. Building Lines and Future Width Lines for Streets and Highways:

By amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, establishing building lines and future width lines along seven miles of highway, the Commission has now provided for the future widening of twenty-eight miles of highway by this method.

4. Roadside Control:

The Commission has helped to protect the natural beauty of the scenic highways in the county by preparing an interim ordinance which regulates the use and location of all buildings and structures along these highways. Seventy-six miles of scenic highways are so protected.

5. Improvement in Appearance of Subdivisions:

After lengthy conferences with the public utility companies and the Chief Electrical Engineer of the California State Railroad Commission, the Planning Commission succeeded in securing the agreement of the utility company that they would hereafter place pole lines along the rear lot lines in new subdivisions. The Commission submits tentative subdivision plans to the company for any suggestions they care to make as to the location, width, etc., of utility easements.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR

The Commission will continue work on the preparation of essential units of the county master plan as follows:

1. Revision of Streets and Highways Plan.
2. Completion of Conservation Plan.
3. Completion of Land Use Plan.
4. Completion of Recreation Plan.
5. Completion of First Unit of Community Design Plan.

During the next fiscal year we hope to complete our county base map, on a scale of 1" = 300'. When the Commission started work, no base maps of any description were available for Santa Clara County.

There are insistent demands from nine unincorporated communities for protective zoning regulations and we expect to extend the provisions of the basic zoning plan to include these areas.

Two sections of the county have requested the Commission's aid in the preparation of a plan to guide the subdivision of large acreage parcels. The Commission will prepare suggested amendments to the Master Highway Plan to provide for such divisions in an orderly manner.

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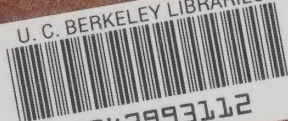
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